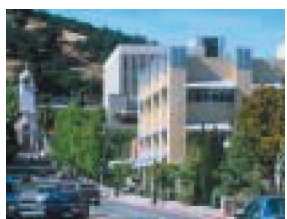

Getting It Right?

A Report Card on the Coyote Valley Specific Plan Process

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Protecting Open Space and Promoting Livable Communities

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Greenbelt Alliance

Executive Summary

This Report Card is an evaluation of the work to date on the proposed Coyote Valley Specific Plan that is being drafted for the City of San Jose by a consulting team led by the Dahlin Group. In June 2003, Greenbelt Alliance released *Getting It Right: Preventing Sprawl in Coyote Valley*. *Getting It Right* is our vision of how to meet San Jose's goal of eventually locating 25,000 housing units and more than 50,000 jobs in Coyote Valley in an environmentally sustainable, socially equitable and economically vibrant manner. This Report Card compares the work to date of the Dahlin Group-led team to the standards established in *Getting It Right*, and to the City's own standards.

Overall, our analysis leads to two major findings:

1. Many key issues have not received adequate attention so far in the planning process, and have received a grade of "Incomplete." Issues that haven't been addressed adequately include:
 - Developing a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan to reduce auto-dependency.
 - Establishing mechanisms to protect open space and promote agriculture.
 - Analyzing and addressing the growth inducing impacts of development in Coyote Valley.
 - Guaranteeing that 20 percent of Coyote Valley's housing will be affordable housing.
 - Ensuring that financing is available for essential community facilities—like public health clinics and child care centers—as well as programs like open space acquisitions.
 - Establishing incentive programs to help small businesses and other providers of high quality jobs.
 - Providing mechanisms that will help ensure that the future economic engine of Coyote Valley will be diverse and strong.
2. In areas where there is enough information to evaluate the work to date, the work is not satisfactory, and has been graded as a C or D. If the specific plan is completed based on this, it will likely lead to sprawling development in Coyote Valley. The following work is on the wrong path:
 - Segregating housing and jobs instead of creating a mixed-use community.
 - Planning for suburban style subdivisions, rather than compact, walkable neighborhoods.
 - Inadequately planning for an integrated park system and protected creeks.
 - Planning a costly transit system that may not meet demand.
 - Building an expensive new road system at once that will encourage piecemeal, sprawling development rather than orderly growth from the town center.
 - Considering changing development triggers to allow development to move forward without regard for San Jose's financial health.

Soon, the San Jose City Council will be asked to review the work to date and consent to continue to move in this direction. Greenbelt Alliance feels strongly that allowing the Coyote Valley specific planning process to continue on its current course would be a mistake. We urge the City Council to direct the Dahlin Group-led consulting team to revisit and improve the work they have done to date, and address the issues that have been neglected thus far.

As Greenbelt Alliance's Executive Director said in the Foreword to *Getting It Right*, "Done right Coyote Valley could be a national model of Smart Growth and the envy of other cities. Done wrong... we'll be in for traffic jams, smog and sprawling development for as far as the eye can see."

So far, the Specific Plan is not headed in the right direction.

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Introduction

Coyote Valley is San Jose's last large undeveloped swath of land. As the City plans for the valley's development, it has a tremendous opportunity to create a brand new community that is a national model of smart growth. Greenbelt Alliance's report *Getting It Right* provided a smart growth vision for Coyote Valley. *Getting It Right* laid out how to meet San Jose's jobs and housing goals in a compact footprint, preserving local agriculture and open space while creating a vibrant community.

This Report Card is an evaluation of the planning work done so far by the City's consultant team, led by the Dahlin Group. For clarity's sake, we refer to the work done to date as the "conceptual plan."

To evaluate the conceptual plan, we compared it to the smart growth goals enumerated by *Getting It Right*. In addition, the San Jose City Council has established standards, called "Expected Outcomes," which also provide a sense of how the conceptual plan measures up to the Council's expectations.

The Report Card is structured by the four major goals of *Getting It Right*:

- Build Community
- Protect the Environment and Agriculture
- Ensure Social Equity
- Promote Economic Vitality

Each of these goals is broken down into specific elements. For each element, the Report Card provides:

- The standard set by *Getting It Right*
- The standard set by City Council's "Expected Outcomes," if it exists
- An explanation of what the planning process has produced to date, referred to here as the conceptual plan
- An analysis of how the Conceptual Specific Plan meets smart growth goals
- A letter grade

Most grades were C's and D's; many were "Incomplete." Currently, the process is on the wrong path to achieve a smart growth vision. Fortunately the City Council still has time to ensure the consulting team gets back on track.

Goal 1: Build Community

A Whole Community

<i>Getting It Right</i>	Dissolve the artificial division between North and Central Coyote Valley to enable the entire area to be coherently planned as a new community.
City Council's Expected Outcomes	<p>The line between North and Central Coyote Valley could be erased to allow for mixed-use throughout as long as 25,000 housing units in Central and 50,000 jobs in North remain as a base.</p> <p>The overall development character of North and Central Coyote Valley should be a very urban, pedestrian and transit-oriented community with a mixture of housing densities, supportive businesses and services and campus industrial uses.</p>
Planning Process	The Conceptual Land Use Plan that the consulting team has drafted largely ignores the idea of eliminating the artificial boundary between North and Central Coyote Valley. In the Conceptual Land Use Plan, the housing and jobs are segregated, with the majority of workplaces located in the North, and the Central Valley dominated by housing subdivisions.
Analysis	The Conceptual Land Use Plan produced by the consultants is inconsistent with <i>Getting It Right</i> and the City Council's Expected Outcomes. It focuses on a low-density, auto-dependent land use pattern, instead of an urban, mixed-use community.
Grade	D-

Town Center

<i>Getting It Right</i>	Establish a mixed-use, transit-anchored, Town Center located on Bailey Avenue, between Monterey Highway and Santa Teresa Boulevard.
Planning Process	In its present form, the plan includes a mixed-use Town Center located on Bailey Avenue with a multi-modal transit center on the Town Center's eastern edge. It also calls for an artificial lake to be created as part of the Town Center.
Analysis	The location of the Town Center and its multi-modal transit station is consistent with <i>Getting It Right</i> . However, the overall feasibility of Coyote Valley's transit system as currently proposed is questionable (addressed below), perhaps jeopardizing the transit-oriented nature of the Town Center. The establishment of the lake, which will not serve any necessary function, will be costly and may take funding away from more desirable facilities and programs. The lake will also use valuable land that could be dedicated to other uses.
Grade	B-

Distinct Neighborhoods

<i>Getting It Right</i>	Create distinct neighborhoods, each with a transit-oriented and pedestrian-friendly center that will include small-scale retail, service, office, public spaces, and community facilities that will contribute to the identity of each neighborhood.
Planning Process	The information released to date shows a series of subdivisions in Central Coyote Valley with three retail centers located along auto-thoroughfares that are referred to as "parkways" by the consulting team.
Analysis	The Conceptual Land Use Plan put forth by the consulting team does not provide for distinct neighborhoods as called for in <i>Getting It Right</i> . Instead it indicates standard, suburban style subdivisions. Subdivisions are largely isolated from one another and community-serving retail, increasing the likelihood of auto-dependency.
Grade	D-

Transportation

<i>Getting It Right</i>	Encourage the use of public transportation and discourage auto-dependency through a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program. The TDM program will promote policies and programs like shuttle services, ridesharing, reduced parking, parking pricing, alternative work schedules, and telecommuting. This will reduce the number of trips within the valley and reduce the parking demand in and around mixed-use and commercial areas.
Planning Process	The planning process has not yet addressed transportation demand management.
Analysis	A Transportation Demand Management program is essential if Coyote Valley's transportation networks are to be used efficiently and if the regional traffic impacts generated by the development of Coyote Valley are to be minimized. A TDM program has yet to be mentioned in the planning process, while <i>Getting It Right</i> lays out an ambitious program.
Grade	Incomplete

Schools

<i>Getting It Right</i>	Co-locate schools and parks and enable them to serve as civic gathering places in Coyote Valley's neighborhoods.
Conceptual Plan	Schools are placed near parks in residential areas.
Analysis	By co-locating parks and schools the consulting team has adopted a key element of <i>Getting It Right</i> . However, the conceptual plan lacks distinct neighborhoods, limiting the potential for these co-located facilities to serve as civic gathering spaces.
Grade	B

Goal 2: Protect the Environment and Agriculture

Greenbelt Protection

<i>Getting It Right</i>	Prevent development of remaining larger open spaces in the Coyote Valley Greenbelt until a policy to permanently protect open space and improve the area as an open space and agricultural buffer is in place.
City Council's Expected Outcomes	The line (Greenline) between Central and South Coyote Valley shall not be moved.
Conceptual Plan	Very little information is available regarding how the specific plan will address enhancing the Greenbelt as a non-urban buffer.
Analysis	It is crucial that a plan for South Coyote Valley is developed in conjunction with the rest of the Coyote Valley Specific Plan. The Specific Plan must also include provisions to retain viable agriculture and maintain the buffer between the City of San Jose and Morgan Hill.
Grade	Incomplete

Parks

<i>Getting It Right</i>	Plan for a network of new parkland, trails, and other recreational open space that is fully integrated into all areas planned for development.
City Council's Expected Outcomes	North and Central-Coyote Valley should contain a rich system of parks, trails, and recreation areas.
Conceptual Plan	Currently the work of the consulting team shows what is in essence a central park. Other parkland and pocket parks are located in residential areas, while trails and recreational open space are aligned with Fisher Creek.
Analysis	As in <i>Getting It Right</i> , there is a central park, but the remaining park space appears unevenly distributed among the residential areas. Some areas, such as the southeast portion of the Valley, appear to lack any significant urban park space.
Grade	C

Fisher and Coyote Creeks

<i>Getting It Right</i>	Restore Fisher Creek to serve habitat, flood management, and recreation functions. Protect Coyote Creek against adverse impacts on habitat and water quality.
Conceptual Plan	As currently conceived, Fisher Creek would be realigned to what the consulting team has determined to be a historic location and is proposed to provide wildlife habitat, serve as a flood control mechanism and be a recreation amenity. According to the consultants, Fisher Creek must remain separate from the proposed lake near the Town Center to reduce the risk of invasive species moving from the lake to the creek. Residential development is shown near Coyote Creek on the east side of Monterey Highway.
Analysis	<p>The consulting team has stated that the realigned Fisher Creek will meet the goals laid out in <i>Getting It Right</i>. Little evidence is available yet to confirm this, particularly with regard to habitat. The proposed auto-thoroughfares—the parkways—are closely aligned with Fisher Creek, possibly threatening its ability to provide viable wildlife habitat. The proposed artificial lake could also negatively impact the ability of Fisher Creek to serve as a wildlife habitat area.</p> <p>Coyote Creek will be very close to urban development on the east side of Monterey Highway. This is of concern, as urban runoff will flow into Coyote Creek and could harm wildlife throughout the Coyote Creek Park chain.</p>
Grade	C

Agriculture

<i>Getting It Right</i>	Create a comprehensive agriculture policy that includes mitigations for agricultural lands lost to development and sets aside land for small-scale agriculture and community gardens.
City Council's Expected Outcomes	<p>The plan will include Mid and North Coyote Valley for land planning and will include South Coyote in the infrastructure financing mechanism only. The South Coyote Valley Greenbelt is included only to determine financing and other mechanisms to secure this as a permanent Greenbelt.</p> <p>The plan should seek mechanisms to facilitate the permanent acquisition of fee title or conservation easements in South Coyote.</p>
Conceptual Plan	Progress is underway on an agricultural element to the specific plan, but it is only in its early stages at this time.
Analysis	A comprehensive agricultural component that sets aside land and includes programs to promote farming should be fully integrated into the specific plan. This will help to maintain the agricultural heritage of the valley and provide fresh farm products to the urban community. This could also be a model for promoting farming on the urban edge.
Grade	Incomplete

Growth Inducing Impacts

<i>Getting It Right</i>	Develop a plan to minimize the growth inducing impacts development will have on the surrounding hillsides to the west and east of Coyote Valley.
Conceptual Plan	The planning process has not yet addressed minimizing growth inducing impacts on the surrounding hillsides and the region.
Analysis	Regional impacts need to be thoroughly analyzed to determine how the surrounding hillsides, other parts of the county and even areas outside of Santa Clara County are affected. Without a comprehensive analysis, the Coyote Valley Specific Plan will put an undue burden on surrounding areas.
Grade	Incomplete

Goal 3: Ensure Social Equity

Affordable Housing

<i>Getting It Right</i>	Dedicate at least 20 percent of all housing units as affordable housing for low, very-low, and extremely-low income residents, with the range of incomes distributed across all residential areas. Establish inclusionary zoning and incentive programs for affordable housing.
City Council's Expected Outcomes	The plan shall include a requirement that will mandate 20 percent of all units be "deed-restricted, below-market-rate units."
Conceptual Plan	The work to date on the plan accepts the 20 percent affordable housing goal but provides no details of how this goal will be met.
Analysis	The planning process to date has not identified where the affordable housing will go, which income levels will be targeted, or what programs or policies will be used to create affordable housing.
Grade	Incomplete

Transit System

<i>Getting It Right</i>	Provide for a range of transit options including Caltrain, bus rapid transit (which could eventually serve as a light rail line), and a local bus loop within Coyote Valley.
City Council's Expected Outcomes	The Specific Plan should plan for the extension of light rail and heavy rail into Central Coyote Valley and use these facilities to orient development.
Conceptual Plan	A transportation network including CalTrain and a rubber-wheeled transit line in a fixed guideway (which could become a VTA light rail line) is being planned.
Analysis	<p>It has been encouraging to see that the planning process has made transit a priority. As noted previously, the multi-modal station currently proposed as part of the Town Center is commendable and consistent with both <i>Getting It Right</i> and the City Council's "Expected Outcomes."</p> <p>However, the proposed internal transit system has several flaws. Unlike a traditional bus system, the "spoke" system is unlikely to have adequate frequency and ensure short walking distances to transit stops. The high cost of the proposed rubber-tired guideway system could also preclude other community services and amenities.</p>
Grade	C

Infrastructure and Amenities

<i>Getting It Right</i>	Establish a Community Facilities and Services District to fund and manage infrastructure projects and community amenities within Coyote Valley.
City Council's Expected Outcomes	Identify locations for public facilities (libraries, parks, schools, etc.) in the land use plan and include these facilities in the financing plan. Identify financing measures for the needed capital improvements to support the planned levels of development.
Conceptual Plan	A Community Facilities and Services District has been discussed, but at this point little information is available.
Analysis	The revenue generated by development will fund infrastructure and amenities; these include roads, sewer lines, health clinics, open space acquisition, and much more. A Community Facilities and Services District must be established to ensure adequate funding for each. Expensive visual amenities and overpriced infrastructures—such as the proposed lake and the rubber-tired transit system—should not be developed at the expense of other facilities and programs.
Grade	Incomplete

High Quality Jobs

<i>Getting It Right</i>	Put in place incentive programs and implement policies that will create opportunities for small businesses, including non-profits, and other providers of high quality jobs.
Conceptual Plan	No incentive program has been discussed to implement policies favorable to small business, non-profits, and employers bringing high quality jobs.
Analysis	If the specific plan is to successfully serve as a blueprint for a vibrant new community, it will need to provide the foundation for a wide array of jobs. At this point, there has been little mention of the types of jobs that will be encouraged in Coyote Valley.
Grade	Incomplete

Goal 4: Promote Economic Vitality

Orderly Development

<i>Getting It Right</i>	Phase development in an orderly and contiguous fashion starting from the Town Center and neighborhood cores.
City Council's Expected Outcomes	The Task Force should review the potential to utilize “subregions” of the valley that will incorporate jobs and housing that can move forward when the subregion has the ability to finance the appropriate infrastructure. Residential projects will be issued building permits in parallel with the development of jobs when either the projects are purely mixed-use in their construction or the jobs and housing are constructed simultaneously.
Conceptual Plan	The consultants have discussed beginning development at the Town Center. All other areas will be developed as market conditions and building opportunities arise.
Analysis	<p>It is encouraging to see that the consulting team is planning for the mixed-use urban Town Center to be built first.</p> <p>But beyond the Town Center, the conceptual plan makes orderly, incremental development difficult. Coyote Valley already has a network of roads, but the consulting team has largely disregarded this. Instead, the conceptual plan will require a massive investment in roads throughout the Valley at the very beginning of the project. Besides being very expensive, this is likely to lead to a patchwork of low-density development throughout the Valley, instead of orderly, compact growth outward from the city center.</p>
Grade	C-

Diversified Economy

<i>Getting It Right</i>	Institute policies that promote a diversified economy, including agriculture, technology, and services, among other sectors.
Conceptual Plan	Policies that promote a diversified economy have not been thoroughly discussed during the planning process.
Analysis	The conceptual plan does not address how to encourage a well-balanced economy. This is an essential component for a specific plan for any community the size of Coyote Valley.
Grade	Incomplete

Development Triggers

<i>Getting It Right</i>	Maintain current Coyote Valley development triggers concerning the fiscal health of San Jose to ensure that development in Coyote Valley does not adversely impact the fiscal well-being of the City of San Jose as a whole.
City Council's Expected Outcomes	The plan should allow for the current General Plan budget triggers to be changed based upon the Valley or its subregions' jobs and housing revenues covering the General Fund cost of services.
Conceptual Plan	The consulting team has floated the idea that the development triggers should be changed to make development easier.
Analysis	San Jose must be in a financial position to accommodate the development of Coyote Valley before that development begins. The triggers help to ensure this, and should not be altered simply to make development easier without regard for the City's financial health.
Grade	D

Conclusion

The Coyote Valley specific planning process is on the wrong track. Most of the plan's components are inadequate or incomplete.

At this point, the San Jose City Council should not let the Coyote Valley specific planning process advance to the next phase. The work done to date is not consistent with the standards set in *Getting It Right*. Furthermore, in many key areas, the work done to date is not consistent with the “Expected Outcomes” laid out by the City Council. Perhaps most importantly, in areas from open space protection to affordable housing to facilities financing, little work has been done at all. There must be substantial progress on these areas before the City Council gives the specific planning process the “green light” to move forward.

The City of San Jose has the chance to create a national model of smart growth in Coyote Valley. But to do that—and to avoid traffic jams, smog, and sprawl—the City Council has to get the planning process back on the right track.